

## **Magnificent Manufacturing**

### **Talbert 75-Ton 3+3+3-Spread Axle Trailer Provides a Colossal Solution For Bill Miller Equipment's Booming Business**

**ECKHART MINES, Md.** — It started as a one-man show in one of the hottest mining regions in the U.S. Young Bill Miller would pull old parts from local mines and stone quarries out of his father's scrapyards, and at one point he dismantled a Caterpillar D9G by himself. Later, working in a three-sided structure, he bought, repaired and sold parts, and in 1978 he formed Bill Miller Equipment Sales.

Today, the Eckhart Mines, Md.-based business purchases, sells, leases and moves large equipment that's used in coal, gold and copper mines. It has 100 employees, a fleet of 450 pieces of equipment for sale and rent, and a second location in Carlin, Nev.

With frequent auctions and locations in the heart of two U.S. mining regions, Bill and his son, Nathan, along with the rest of the crew, constantly travel across the U.S. The 2,500-mile road trip from Eckhart Mines to Carson City is just 500 miles short of a coast-to-coast drive. But the regular trip is necessary to keep up with the company's mobility services, which remain a strong part of the Bill Miller Equipment reputation.

"We wouldn't be in the equipment business if we couldn't mobilize and service the equipment we buy and sell," Nathan said.

To meet the demand, Bill Miller Equipment maintains a fleet of eight road tractors, 15 service trucks, 16 trailers, two crane trucks and three late-model boom trucks, all manned by professional operators. "The idea is, if we sell it and rent it, we can move it and maintain it just as well as anyone in the business," Nathan said.

The dependable service has always been a hallmark for the service-oriented company. What's been changing over the past few years is the size of the equipment. Bill Miller Equipment began buying and selling some of the bulkier, heavier mining equipment about five years ago, just as the equipment industry began picking up. At the time, the average weight of the larger equipment was a whopping 155,000 pounds with the largest pieces being CAT 992G, 993K and 994F wheel loaders. The company's fleet of 55-ton trailers simply wasn't able to handle the loads.

In previous years, the Bill Miller Equipment crew would spend one or three days disassembling equipment before finally loading the machines onto several 55-ton trailers. "The time alone that it took to dismantle the equipment was taxing. Add in the extra trucks and trailers we needed to haul the equipment, and we weren't being resourceful or realistic," Nathan said.

On average, he said, it took a two or three-person crew anywhere from one to three 12-hour days to dismantle the equipment, and the same amount of time to reassemble. The labor costs alone were \$4,300, in addition to the fuel costs and maintenance for the number of trailers they needed.

As the logistics manager and a driver for the company, Nathan wanted to make this problem a thing of the past. He and his dad had a good experience with Hale Trailer Brake & Wheel, a Talbert Manufacturing trailer dealer, so he reached out to the dealer to see what they could do together to solve a problem of this magnitude.

In their years of developing a working relationship, Talbert had already solved a few of Bill Miller Equipment's transportation problems. Nathan had always been impressed with the quality of the products and level of service, and the relationship had led to the purchase of nine Talbert trailers.

In this case, Bill Miller Equipment not only needed a higher-capacity trailer, but also one with the axle configurations and versatility to haul it through numerous states. Although the problem seemed larger than any of the previous challenges Bill Miller Equipment had presented to Talbert, even in the literal sense, Nathan was optimistic and confident the trailer manufacturer would come up with a solution.

"Having firsthand experience with Talbert, I knew they were capable of meeting my customization and requirements," he said.

### **Tailored Trailer**

Sure enough, the Rensselaer, Ind.-based manufacturer came back with a proposal for a new specialized trailer, a 75-ton 3+3+3-spread axle, for the large, heavy loads that Bill Miller Equipment frequently handled. The design was for a nine-axle trailer consisting of a three-axle jeep dolly, a three-axle trailer with a flip gooseneck extension, an E3Nitro (a nitrogen-assisted dampening system) and three removable flip axles.

When Nathan saw the drawings, he knew the trailer was fairly close, but for the 992G wheel loaders, the trailer's gooseneck needed a place for the loader arm to sit. This would not only require a boom well, but also a lower, specialized gooseneck design.

Nathan took a Sharpie to the gooseneck on Talbert's drawing, and his revisions led to what would become the lowest gooseneck Talbert has ever fabricated. But there were details that still needed to be worked out. Once again, just as Nathan expected, Talbert's designers came back with a perfect, customized solution. They planned to reconfigure the hydraulics and the geometry to slope the gooseneck in the area that needed to be the lowest. There would be a boom well in the gooseneck specifically for the 992G loader arms, and they braced it with a half-inch steel plate to boost durability in that portion of the gooseneck.

“I told them this is what we needed, and they did it,” Nathan said. “I don’t know how many other companies would have just told me to forget it. Talbert made it work. That really means a lot when your company depends on it.”

The rest of the trailer is equally specialized. The E3Nitro in the 3+3+3 configuration provides proportionate weight distribution to the rear axle group. By hydraulically dampening axle movement and controlling load transfer, the E3Nitro absorbs hauling and loading shocks to reduce stress and provide a smoother ride for Bill Miller Equipment’s drivers. When operated as a 3+1 or 3+2 configuration, the axle attachment(s) can be lifted for easy backing. And it provides a 15-foot, 1-inch spacing between the third and fourth axles to make it legal in states requiring that configuration. All three axle attachments have flip-up removable connections with 60-inch axle spacing, and Bill Miller Equipment can shim the Nitro axle extension if needed.

### **Time Saver**

Bill Miller Equipment received the specialized trailer in October 2013. The crew has made several trips across the states since then, and Nathan says he’s seeing the benefits of the trailer, both fiscally and logistically. “Adding this trailer to our fleet has saved us an immense amount of time and money. The trailer is lightweight and gives us 20 tons more payload than any of our other trailers. We can load bigger equipment, which means we’re spending less time on tear down.”

Nathan also said the trailer has helped reduce the headaches of extra loads and state regulations. “With this trailer, we have no problems traveling through numerous states, which means a lot when you’re making frequent 2,000- to 2,500-mile trips.” He added that the E3Nitro makes scaling at checkpoints a simple adjustment rather than the 15- to 20-minute process it had become before purchasing the new trailer.

In six months, Bill Miller Equipment reduced its cross-country loads by six. Since each load costs the company about \$6,000 in fuel, tires and other maintenance, Nathan anticipates the company is on target to save \$72,000 in a year. That’s not including labor costs and expenses from some of the local loads the company has been able to condense, as well.

### **The Talbert Legacy**

Nathan says he has especially come to appreciate the convenience of being able to rearrange the goosenecks and flip axles across all of his trailers, something that’s possible since the parts on the Talbert trailer are interchangeable, and he wouldn’t hesitate to purchase another one. And if the company continues in its next 36 years as it started, it’s going to need more.

### **About Talbert Manufacturing**

Talbert has been building world-class heavy-haul and specialized trailers to rigorous customer

specifications since 1938. The company offers complete lines of heavy-haul trailers and specialized transportation equipment for the commercial, industrial, military and government sectors. Its trailers and equipment are used in applications as diverse as renewable energy, aerospace, heavy construction, in-plant material handling, manufacturing and processing systems and much more. More information: Talbert Manufacturing, 1628 W. State Road 114, Rensselaer, IN 47978; 800-348-5232; sales@talbertmfg.com; www.talbertmfg.com.

### **About Bill Miller Equipment**

Founded in 1978 by Bill Miller and his wife, Marie, Bill Miller Equipment Sales Inc. has grown to become a global leader in the heavy equipment industry. More information: Bill Miller Equipment Sales, 10200 Parkersburg Road N.W., Eckhart Mines, MD 21528; 301-689-1013; www.bmillerequipmentsales.com.